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CIA Intervenes To Block Charges In Car-Theft Case

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Attempts by U.S. Attorney William Kennedy to prosecute Mexico's former director of federal security have been thwarted by top U.S. officials who say he is the CIA's "most important source in Mexico and Central America."

Miguel Nassar Haro, 52, who until January directed the Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS), has been implicated by U.S. investigators in a ring that has stolen \$8.4 million in autos from San Diego and Orange counties and smuggled them into Mexico.

But both the CIA and Justice Department, says Kennedy, have voiced concern about prosecuting Nassar because of his "indispensability as a source of intelligence in Mexico and Central America."

"I realize this must be factored in, but I'm concerned about the victims — car owners or the insurance companies — that have paid off claims. We repeatedly have voiced the view that prosecution must proceed. No one has said these indictments cannot be returned, but it is still a matter of concern and debate in Washington."

The U.S. attorney's office, which recommended prosecution last November, has been informed that the Justice Department has not decided whether to prosecute Nassar because of concerns expressed by the CIA as well as the FBI's legal attache in Mexico City, Gordon McGinley.

Both McGinley and a CIA operative, identified only as Max, were present at a July 25 meeting in Mexico City where Nassar was described as "absolutely indispensable" and where U.S. Embassy and Justice Department officials were told "if we lost him, it would be a disaster."

But *The San Diego Union* has learned that the CIA lost interest in Nassar after he left his job and claims it was not responsible for delaying his possible prosecution.

Top-level meetings have been held both in Mexico City and Washington, D.C., to discuss the possible prosecution of Nassar. Among those attending, in both cities, was the U.S. ambassador to Mexico, John Gavin.



File Photo

Miguel Nassar Haro

Kennedy was told yesterday that another meeting will be held today in Washington between Justice Department and CIA officials to attempt to resolve the impasse.

Nassar was implicated in the stolen-car ring by investigators and other suspects, including DFS agents.

After a 10-month investigation by the FBI and California Highway Patrol, a federal grand jury here last year returned 28 sealed indictments.

On the night of July 14-15, teams of agents arrested 14 persons, including three DFS agents. Two of these suspects implicated Nassar.

The remaining ring members were in Mexico, but U.S. authorities later gave evidence to the Mexican attorney general's office.

At the same time, descriptions, identification numbers and locations of more than 100 stolen cars were given to the Mexican authorities.

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